

**Please replace the Abstract with the following amended Abstract (previously amended January 23, 2006):**

A punching tool has a guided, axially displaceable die plunger, which is fixed against relative rotation, in a guide bushing. In a bore in its front end a punching die is seated. During the punching stroke the punching die rests against a front face of the die plunger and is axially fixed in place by means of one or several snap-in balls each of which is seated in a transverse bore, which snap-in balls are maintained in engagement with an annular groove by means of a resilient ring in the die plunger. The outer diameter of the resilient ring is only slightly less in the engagement position than the inner diameter of the guide bushing and can be resiliently widened for releasing the punching die outside of the guide bushing.